

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L PALERMO 34

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SUBJ: CONVERSATION WITH GIOVANNI GIOIA

1. SUMMARY: IN JANUARY 8 CONVERSATION, FORMER MINISTER AND LONG-TIME DC "BOSS" IN WESTERN SICILY, GIOVANNI GIOIA, PROJECTED UNSWERVING PERSONAL RESISTANCE TO GOVERNMENT ROLE FOR PCI, NOTED ANDREOTTI'S BRAVURA BUT LACK OF SUFFICIENT GOVERNMENT STRENGTH TO IMPOSE NEEDED LONG-TERM SOLUTIONS, AND SAID CHARGES OF LINKS TO MAFIA WERE EFFORTS TO DISCREDIT HIM AND HIS ANTI-COMMUNIST LINE. EN SUMMARY.
2. GIOVANNI GIOIA'S LENGTHY AND NOW PERHAPS WANING CONTROL OF THE DC IN WESTERN SICILY AND HIS NEAR DICTATORIAL ROLE IN PAST LOCAL GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS ARE MATTERS OF PUBLIC RECORD AND PREVIOUS CONSULATE REPORTING. THOUGH HIS LINKS TO THE MAFIA ARE FREQUENTLY

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INFLATED AND FABLED, GIOIA RECENTLY LOST THE LATEST IN A LONG SERIES OF LAW SUITS HE HAS BROUGHT AGAINST JOURNALISTS AND OTHERS FOR ASSERTING THAT HE HAS LINKS WITH THE "HONORED SOCIETY". LOST LAWSUITS NOTWITHSTANDING, GIOIA RETAINS HIS MEMBERSHIP IN THE DC NATIONAL DIRECTORATE AND A VERY POWERFUL VOICE IN SICILIAN AFFAIRS. FANFANIS LOYAL LIEUTENANT IN SICILY, GIOIA'S "VISCERAL ANTI-COMMUNISM" STILL EVOKES CONSIDERABLE RESONANCE IN THE ISLAND'S ELECTORATE.
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3. DURING A JANUARY 8 CONVERSATION, GIOIA SAID HE COULD ACCEPT COMMUNIST SUPPORT IN THE SICILIAN REGIONAL ASSEMBLY FOR PROGRAMS AND POLICIES THAT HAD BEEN FULLY ARTICULATED IN ADVANCE AND SUSTAINED BY THE FOUR-PARTY, CENTER-LEFT REGIONAL GOVERNMENT. HIS FOLLOWERS, THEREFORE, PARTICIPATE IN THE REGIONAL GIUNTA. THEY REMAIN IN THE OPPOSITION IN THE PALERMO PROVINCE AND CITY GOVERNMENTS WHERE COMMUNIST VIEWS AND VOTES ARE SOUGHT DURING THE

DEVELOPMENT OF LEGISLATION. GIOIA STRONGLY URGED THAT THE DC GO INTO THE OPPOSITION RATHER THAN COLLABORATE WITH THE PCI WHEN STABLE MAJORITIES WITHOUT THE COMMUNISTS CAN NOT BE FORMED AT THE LOCAL LEVEL. HE SAID THERE WAS AGREEMENT ON THIS POINT AT THE NATIONAL DC LEVEL AND SUGGESTED THAT THE PARTY MIGHT CHASTEN THOSE LOCAL DC

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ORGANIZATIONS WHICH HAVE USED COLLUSION WITH THE PCI AS A MAKEWEIGHT IN THE DC'S INTERNAL POWER STRUGGLES. IN ANY EVENT, GIOIA WAS CONVINCED THAT THE PROBLEMS AFFLICTING MOST LOCAL GOVERNMENTS WOULD MAKE IT DIFFICULT FOR THE COMMUNISTS TO DO BETTER THAN THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS.

4. AT NATIONAL LEVEL, ANDREOTTI GOVERNMENT IS ONLY ONE NOW POSSIBLE AT A TIME WHEN DC MUST CONTINUE TO GOVERN. LARGE CONSENSUS THUS EXISTS WITHIN PARTY THAT ANDREOTTI GOVERNMENT WILL NOT BE THREATENED UNTIL A BETTER ALTERNATIVE HAS BEEN DEvised. BOTH DC AND PART OF THE PSI ARE WORKING TOWARD SUCH AN ALTERNATIVE BUT IT WILL TAKE FINESSE, CAUTION AND IMAGINATION. PSI SECRETARY CRAXI IS MOVING THINGS IN FAVORABLE DIRECTION AS IS JUSTIFIED SOCIALIST FEAR OF HISTORIC COMPROMISE. CURRENT GOVERNMENT BY ABSTENTION CANNOT GO ON FOREVER, HOWEVER, SINCE PRESENT, BLEAK SITUATION REQUIRES STRONGER GOVERNMENT MEASURES.

5. IN AN INTERESTING DISCOURSE ON PATRONAGE AND POLITICAL POWER, (AT WHICH HE IS A MASTER PRACTITIONER), GIOIA SAID HE HAD ALWAYS LOST VOTES WHEN, AT ELECTION TIME, HE HAD HELD POSITIONS OF POWER WHICH THE VOTERS EXPECTED HIM TO USE IN THEIR BEHALF. FOR EVERY REQUEST ACCOMMODATED, TEN PEOPLE WERE DISAPPOINTED. MOREOVER, CONFIDENTIAL

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ITALIAN ELECTORATE IS NOW RELATIVELY MORE RESPONSIVE TO CONFRONTATION BETWEEN IDEAS RATHER THAN TO CLIENTELISMO. GIOIA THUS FELT HIS VOCAL ANTI-COMMUNISM WOULD PRESERVE HIS POWER EVEN THOUGH HIS PREVIOUSLY NEAR-TOTAL CONTROL OF LOCAL PATRONAGE IS DIMINISHED. HERE AGAIN, GIOIA THOUGHT THE DC RISKED MORE BY VEILED OR OTHER FORMS OF COMPROMISE WITH THE PCI AT THE LOCAL LEVEL THAN IT WOULD BY ENTERING THE OPPOSITION AND MAINTAINING ITS IDEOLOGICAL TRADITIONS.

6. AS FOR CHARGES (AND COURT DECISIONS) ALLEGING HIS CONNECTIONS WITH THE MAFIA, GIOIA REJECTED THESE AS WEAPONS BEING USED BY THOSE WHO OPPOSE HIS ANTI-COMMUNIST POSITION.

7. COMMENT: IN A NEARLY ONE-HOUR CONVERSATION, GIOIA SEEMED CONVINCED THAT HE WAS ON TOP OF THE LOCAL SITUATION DESPITE TEMPORARY SETBACKS AND THE STAIN OF MAFIA CHARGES. WHILE THE LATTER WILL DOUBTLESS CIRCUMSCRIBE HIS FUTURE AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL, HE IS A

LONG WAY FROM DOWN AND OUT LOCALLY. SIMILARLY, WE SUSPECT HE IS,
AS HE SAYS, CLOSER TO THE ATTITUDES OF THE DC ELECTORATE ON THE
HISTORIC COMPROMISE THAN ARE MANY OF HIS PARTY COLLEAGUES IN THE
ISLAND. DC AWARENESS OF THIS FACT SHOULD STRENGTHEN GIOIA'S
RESTRAINING ROLE LOCALLY AND SERVE HIM WELL POLITICALLY SHOULD

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COMPROMISE GO TOO FAR.
COLLINS

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